

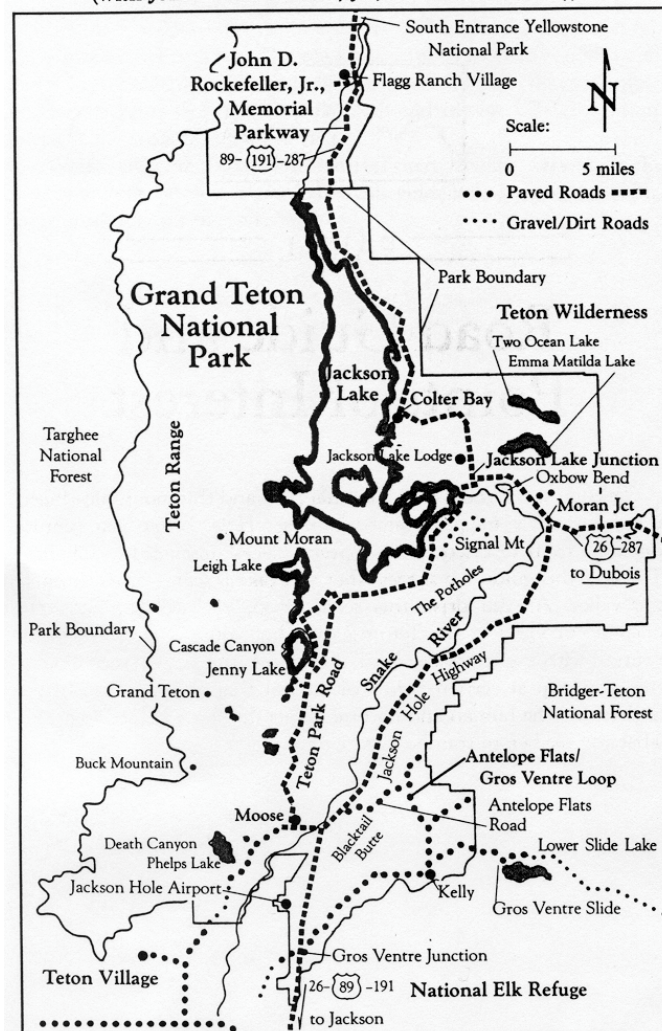
Field Report

Grand Teton National Park

■ 1.0 Summary

Grand Teton National Park, located in northwestern Wyoming, is a National Park rich in natural wonders as well as controversial history (see Figure 1). The Park contains the youngest peaks in the Rocky Mountains, glacial moraines, and river valleys together with the ecosystems and wildlife habitat associated with those varied landscapes.

Figure 1. Grand Teton National Park



The Park is predominately surrounded by lands under public management. Only three percent of Teton County's land is in private ownership, the rest being the property of the federal or state governments. Visitors to the Park take advantage of over 100 miles of roads and 225 miles of trails for experiencing the variety of natural resources. Most activities take place or start at Moose, Jenny Lake, and Colter Bay visitor centers and Flagg Ranch Information Center.

Traffic congestion is a problem at certain times of year and at certain locations within the Park, and especially in the nearby town of Jackson, Wyoming. However, the dispersed origins and destinations of visitors, many of whom are on their way to or from Yellowstone National Park, pose a challenge to planners and park officials who favor alternative transportation systems (ATS) as a means of reducing automobile use. For an ATS to be feasible, it cannot be limited to Grand Teton National Park, but must extend throughout the Jackson Hole area.

■ 2.0 Background Information

2.1 Location

Grand Teton National Park is located in the northwestern portion of Wyoming, approximately five miles east of the Idaho state line, and south of Yellowstone National Park, which includes portions of Wyoming, Idaho, and Montana within its borders. There are three major routes that provide access to the Park through Wyoming. U.S. 26-287 enters the Park at Moran Entrance Station from Dubois to the east. U.S. 26-89-191 arrives at the Park from the south, through the Town of Jackson, at the Moose Entrance Station. Access from the north, through Yellowstone National Park and the John D. Rockefeller, Jr. Parkway, arrives at Grand Teton's North Entrance.

The Jackson Hole Airport is located on the southeastern edge of Grand Teton, between Moose and Jackson. Regular passenger service is provided by two airlines. The nearest Greyhound bus service is to Idaho Falls, Idaho. There is also service from Salt Lake City, Utah to Cody, Wyoming. The Grand Teton Lodge Company provides shuttle service between Jackson, the Jackson Hole Airport, Jackson Lake Lodge, and Colter Bay Village. The Lodge Company also offers bus tours of the Park and of Yellowstone National Park on a regular schedule during the summer. Similar tours are offered by at least one operator from Jackson.

2.2 Administration and Classification

The NPS is responsible for management and administration of Grand Teton National Park as a natural area under the provisions of its establishment act. The boundary of the Park at establishment included over 310,000 acres. The Tetons first received government protection in 1897 when Congress created the Teton Forest Reserve from land not included in Yellowstone National Park. In 1929 Grand Teton National Park was designated to include

the central peaks of the Teton mountain range and some of the lakes at their base. Local residents were opposed to federalization of land within the basin known as Jackson Hole. John D. Rockefeller, Jr., in furtherance of his family's philanthropic activities and at the urging of the Superintendent of Yellowstone National Park, began to purchase parcels of land in the area, intending to transfer ownership to the federal government. Local opposition to federal control of the land delayed federal acceptance of the gift. Rockefeller threatened to return the land to the open market leading President Franklin Roosevelt to declare 221,000 acres of the Snake River Valley as the Jackson Hole National Monument. Congress and the State of Wyoming, in opposition to the President's action, brought suit and withheld funds for maintenance of the monument. A series of compromises led to a Congressional designation of the monument as Grand Teton National Park in 1950.

2.3 Physical Description

The peaks of the Teton Range rise over 7,000 feet above the sagebrush flats of Jackson Hole. The name "Jackson Hole" refers to the valley region surrounded by mountain ranges and highlands. Jackson is the name of the town that lies at its southern tip, four miles away from Grand Teton National Park. The Tetons are the youngest mountains in the Rocky Mountain chain. At the mountains' base, a series of large lakes have been formed (see Figure 2). Conifer trees cover the mountain slopes and lower prominences rising from the floor of the valley. The forests have been protected from fire for many years and consequently evidence signs of declining vitality.

Figure 2. Grand Teton National Park Scenery



2.4 Mission and Goals of the National Park

Grand Teton's purpose statement, contained in the January 1995 Statement for Management and prepared during an assessment workshop by participants from the Park, is twofold:

1. "To conserve the scenery and the natural and historic object and the wildlife and to provide for the public benefit and enjoyment by such means and manner to leave them unimpaired for future generations"; and
2. "To insure the permanent conservation of elk within the Park."

Due to the circumstances involved in establishing Grand Teton National Park and the John D. Rockefeller, Jr. Memorial Parkway, special considerations, and constraints affect management of the areas:

- The Park will designate corridors, including stock driveways, for movement of persons and property to or from national forest, state and private lands adjacent to the Park;
- Leases, permits, etc., will remain in effect until terminated;
- No further extension or establishment of national Parks or monuments will be allowed in Wyoming without Congressional authorization;
- The Park will continue grazing and residences where legally occupied and used;
- Existing government licenses, leases, or permits for mining, public accommodations and temporary occupancy or uses will not be recognized for continuation;
- The elk will be controlled and managed by qualified and experienced hunters in certain geographic locations;
- There will be no federal fee for hunting;
- An annual plan will be required (by the NPS and Wyoming) for elk management;
- The Park will provide for a state highway within the Park;
- The reservoir, built for reclamation purposes, will be maintained and improved;
- Lands will be subject to valid existing rights;
- Entrance and user fees will be collected; and
- The Park will provide compensation/reimbursement of tax revenues lost to local governments.

2.5 Visitation Levels and Visitor Profile

Grand Teton National Park is open year-round. While the summer period is the busiest, the Park is used increasingly in the winter months by snowmobilers, cross-country skiers, snowshoers, and other winter outdoor enthusiasts. The Park received almost 4.2 million visitors in 1999, up from 3.5 million in 1993, an increase of 18 percent. By 2005, annual visitation is expected to top 4.8 million.

Between 1979 and 1998, 90 to 96 percent of annual visitation occurred during the six months from May through October (see Table 1).

Table 1. Average Monthly Visitation, 1979-1998

Month	Average Visitation	Month	Average Visitation	Month	Average Visitation	Month	Average Visitation
January	20,681	April	27,700	July	523,939	October	88,051
February	23,410	May	120,592	August	523,988	November	33,545
March	27,147	June	350,286	September	271,877	December	22,615

Rangers at Grand Teton National Park group visitors into two general categories: those simply passing through the park (19 percent) and those who leave their vehicles and use the Park's resources for any period of time (81 percent). Forty-five percent of all visitors stay less than one full day (six hours on average), while 55 percent stay more than one day (3.5 days on average).

The most popular destinations within the park are South Jenny Lake (72 percent of visitors), the Snake River (58 percent of visitors), Colter Bay Village (57 percent of visitors), Moose Village (53 percent of visitors), and Jackson Lake Lodge (42 percent of visitors).

■ 3.0 Existing Conditions, Issues and Concerns

3.1 Transportation Conditions, Issues and Concerns

Motorized Vehicles

The Park's comprehensive *GTNP Transportation Study*, completed in 2000, measures annual average daily traffic (AADT) volumes in Grand Teton National Park. Data show that traffic volumes grew steadily on most major roads during the 1990s, and are expected to continue to grow in the coming years. For example, on the North-South Highway, the number of cars passing by the Fish Hatchery grew at an annually compounded rate of

about 4.8 percent in the 1990s. From 6,400 vehicles in 1998, the AADT volume is expected to rise to 8,450 vehicles by 2001. On North Park Road at the north boundary, traffic increased at an annually compounded increase of 4.0 percent. From 2,200 vehicles in 1998, the AADT volume is expected to rise to 2,750 vehicles by 2005.

The results of an earlier study of traffic volume within the Park are shown in Table 2.

Table 2. Annual Average Daily Traffic Volumes

Roadway	Location	1994 AADT ¹
North-South Hwy.	Between south Park boundary and Airport Rd.	6,200
North-South Hwy.	Between Airport Rd. and Moose Jct.	4,700
North-South Hwy.	Between Moose Jct. and Antelope Flats Rd.	3,300
North-South Hwy.	Between Antelope Flats Rd. and Moran Jct.	2,300
North-South Hwy.	Between Moran Jct. and east Park boundary	1,500
Teton Park Rd.	Between Moose Jct. and Jenny Lake Loop Rd.	2,000
Teton Park Rd.	Between south and north jcts. of Jenny Lake Loop Rd.	1,500
Teton Park Rd.	Between Jenny Lake Loop Rd. and North Entrance Rd.	1,500
Gros Ventre Rd.	Between North-South Hwy. and east Park boundary	800
North Entrance Rd.	Between Moran Jct. and Teton Park Rd.	1,800
North Entrance Rd.	Between Teton Park Rd. and Colter Bay Village	3,000
North Entrance Rd.	Between Colter Bay Village and Flagg Ranch	2,100
North Entrance Rd.	Between Flagg Ranch and Yellowstone NP boundary	1,700
Moose-Wilson Rd.	Between Teton Park Rd. and southwest Park boundary	600
Antelope Flats Rd.	Between North-South Hwy. and Teton Forest Rd.	200
Colter Bay Entrance Rd.	Between North Entrance Rd. and Colter Bay	2,000
Jenny Lake Loop Rd.	Between north and south jcts. of Teton Park Rd.	600

¹ Rounded to nearest 1,000.

Source: 1994 Traffic Data Report, 1995, NPS.

At present, however, congestion within the park is minimal, except occasionally along Jenny Lake Loop Road. Parking is generally adequate, except at the Jenny Lake Visitor Center, Lupine Meadows, Death Canyon, and Granite Canyon trailheads (see Figure 3). Congestion in and near Jackson is a greater concern, with north-south highway traffic often backing up southbound into town. The vast majority of visitors to Grand Teton National Park, four million persons annually, pass through tiny Jackson.

Figure 3. Parking and Traffic Conditions at Visitor Center and Entrance

Bicycles and Pedestrians

There is some concern expressed by Park staff members and local residents and businesses about safety problems for bicyclists sharing the roads with fast-moving automobiles (see Figure 4). It has been suggested that paved shoulders need to be added and/or widened on all Park roads to provide better safety for bicyclists. There is much summer congestion and numerous conflicts between motorized vehicles, pedestrians, and bicyclists in downtown Jackson.

Figure 4. Bicycle Carrier

Transit

The Grand Teton Lodge Company operates buses and vans within Grand Teton National Park between May and October. Service is provided for a fee to customers. The company provides fixed-route service between Jackson Lake Lodge, Colter Bay, Pacific Creek, Moose, Jenny Lake, other locations within the Park, the Jackson Hole Airport, and the Town of Jackson (See Figure 5). It also provides charter tours within Grand Teton

National Park and to Yellowstone National Park. Nearly all users are guests or employees of the Grand Teton Lodge Company. Although the service is available to anyone, it is not well publicized outside of Grand Teton Lodge Company properties.

Figure 5. Grand Teton Transit Services



The Town of Jackson operates Southern Teton Rapid Transit (START). Service includes fixed-route bus service and on-demand van service, and operates within Jackson and between Jackson and Teton Village. START service is provided for three seasons: winter (approximately December through March), summer (approximately June through September), and “off-season” (approximately April and May). The greatest amount of service is provided in winter and the least is provided in off-season. START is funded through the Town of Jackson, the State of Wyoming, the Federal Transit Administration, and farebox revenues. In June 2000, START carried 17,370 riders versus 6,191 in June 1999, an increase of 280 percent.

3.2 Community Development Conditions, Issues and Concerns

The NPS, (Grand Teton National Park) the USFWS (National Elk Refuge), the United States Forest Service (Bridger-Teton National Forest), the Jackson Hole Chamber of Commerce, the Jackson Hole Historical Society and Museum, Teton County, and the Town of Jackson have agreed to work cooperatively toward creation of a multi-agency campus to provide visitor information and services. The cooperating agencies plan to replace an existing facility located on the north edge of Jackson, in the southwest corner of the National Elk Refuge. The intent of the Multi-Agency Campus (MAC), encompassing the 29-acre site, is:

- Provide more parking for downtown merchants;
- Alleviate traffic in the square by directing summer visitors to the visitor’s portion of the campus for initial orientation to the Town and region;

- Alleviate traffic and improve safety on North Cache by moving visitors to the campus area where they can park and leave their cars;
- Tie-in to the objectives of the new Jackson/Teton County Transportation Plan by providing a transportation hub at the north end of Town – a place where visitors and community members can park their cars and access public transit for the Town, Teton County, and/or up to Grand Teton and/or Yellowstone National Park;
- Provide a pathway linkage from downtown north towards Grand Teton National Park;
- Provide more much-needed housing for the community;
- Provide a park area that will be a pleasant gathering place for community members; and
- Provide additional large community meeting locations by sharing meeting room and auditorium space on the campus.

Community support for the MAC is wide and strong. Citizens and officials are actively lobbying various government agencies and foundations for political and financial support. Supporters are particularly enthusiastic about the ability of the MAC to promote the pooling of resources for providing visitor services and the ability for coordinating transportation services throughout the Jackson Hole region.

3.3 Natural or Cultural Resource Conditions, Issues and Concerns

Visitor usage patterns mirror the recommendations of the area's guidebooks and local residents. Visitors want to know what they should see – recommendations from both the locals and the guidebooks send them to the same sites. Consequently, the inner loop road, Teton Park Road, receives the heaviest traffic, and the stops and attractions along the road receive the heaviest usage. Rangers and volunteers have stepped up trail restoration activities and in some areas heavily used trails have been paved with an all-weather surface to prevent further deterioration.

3.4 Recreation Conditions, Issues and Concerns

The Park and the John D. Rockefeller, Jr. Memorial Parkway encompass approximately 100 miles of paved roads for bicyclists to enjoy. Most roads have painted fog lines and four-foot wide shoulders, and bicycles can go anywhere cars are allowed. A tragic accident occurred during the summer of 1999 in which a motorist traveling along Teton Park Road swerved onto the shoulder, killing a 13-year-old bicyclist.

The Park contains more than 225 miles of maintained trails. The trailheads are located along the Park roads with many trails accessible from the Jenny Lake Loop Road (see

Figure 6). This area has beautiful scenery and is extremely popular. The parking lots in this area have recently been expanded to accommodate the heavy visitation.

Figure 6. Trailhead Parking



Routes in the valley tend to be easier and shorter than mountain hikes. Several trails are self-guided, ranging between 0.5 and 14 miles long, with free brochures or signposts to point out interesting features. Backcountry permits are required for hikes involving overnight camping outside a developed campsite.

■ 4.0 Planning and Coordination

4.1 Unit Plans

Grand Teton National Park staff is participating, as an observer, with Teton County and the Town of Jackson in the regional transportation planning process. This program resulted in recommendations for programming and project funding to implement modifications to roadways and ATS in the area. The local governments are also working to coordinate planning and implementation of the Multi-Agency Campus, for which the Park will provide Visitor Center staffing.

In 2000, park officials completed its *GTNP Transportation Study*. The study recommends incorporating the following transportation goals and objectives into the next revision and update of the Park's General Management Plan:

- “Develop a transportation system that both protects park resources and enhances the quality of the visitor experience;
- “Enhance personal mobility and access by increasing the range of travel mode choices available to park visitors, residents, and employees of all ages and physical abilities;
- “Increase the share of trips made by non-auto modes (bus, bicycle, walking, etc.) for travel to, from, and within the Park, thereby reducing the impacts of motor vehicle traffic;
- “Ensure that park visitors, employees, and residents can travel safely using all modes of travel.”

4.2 Public and Agency Coordination

The Park is working closely with other participants in the Multi-Agency Campus partnership to explore potential for cooperation and promote fund raising.

■ 5.0 Assessment of Need

5.1 Magnitude of Need

Traffic congestion is occasionally a problem within the park, and frequently a problem in the town of Jackson. However, the dispersed origins and destinations of many of Grand Teton’s visitors require a regionwide approach to ATS, not a park-specific one.

5.2 Feasible Alternatives

In June 2000, Teton County and the town of Jackson approved the *Jackson/Teton County Transit Development Plan 2000-2005*, a comprehensive study that describes elements of a successful transportation system in the Jackson Hole area. Such a system, it argues, is needed to preserve the rural character and natural environment of Teton County. The Development Plan proposes that Jackson, Grand Teton National Park, and Grand Teton’s lodges work together in a public-private partnership to provide START bus service between Jackson and the Park. The proposed route would take visitors from Jackson to Colter Bay Village via Teton Park Road in both directions, with major stops along the way at the Moose Visitor Center, Jenny Lake, and Signal Mountain. The route would operate with one hour headways using two buses, with the round trip taking about two hours. Service would begin at 8:00 a.m. and end at 8:00 p.m. in order to coincide with the Colter Bay Visitor Center’s hours of operation. A maintenance facility jointly built and maintained by START and Teton National Park is also envisioned.

Park officials strongly support the plan, and would like to see service extended as far north as the South Entrance to Yellowstone National Park, where visitors could connect with other transit services. It is important that Grand Teton National Park make every possible effort to work together with the county and town to implement the Development Plan; the Plan's success or failure will have far-reaching effects on the future of the Park.

■ 6.0 Bibliography

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GTNP Transportation Study, 2000.

■ 7.0 Persons Interviewed

Cam Hugie, Facilities Manager, Grand Teton National Park

Mel R. Denton, Buffalo Fork Subdistrict Chief Ranger, Grand Teton National Park

Kip E. Knapp, Gros Ventre Subdistrict Chief Ranger, Grand Teton National Park

Charlene Gallina, Planning Director, Town of Jackson, Wyoming

Michael W. Parda, Town Administrator, Town of Jackson, Wyoming

Rolf Belden, Superintendent of Public Works, Town of Jackson, Wyoming

Clay James, Vice President and General Manager, Grand Teton Lodge Company

Roger Foster, Manager of Bus Operations, Grand Teton Lodge Company

Cynthia Hatley, Transit Director, Town of Jackson and Teton County, Wyoming